

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. - 9. (canceled).

10. (new): A pneumatic tire comprising:

a land portion disposed on an equatorial plane of a tread, the land portion extending continuously in a tire circumferential direction;

steep-angle grooves provided at opposite sides of a tire equatorial plane of a tread, the steep-angle grooves being inclined at an angle of not more than 45 degrees relative to a tire circumferential direction such that the steep-angle grooves contact the ground from a side thereof near the tire equatorial plane, an end portion of each steep-angle groove near the tire equatorial plane terminating within the land portion; and

recessed portions formed in the land portion along adjacent tread surface side edges at a tire axial direction inner side of the steep-angle grooves, a depth of the recessed portions gradually increasing and a width of the recessed portions gradually decreasing from longitudinal directional middle portions of the steep-angle grooves toward end portions of the steep-angle grooves near the tire equatorial plane.

11. (new): The pneumatic tire as claimed in claim 10, wherein

an angle, relative to the tire circumferential direction, of boundary lines between the recessed portions and a tread surface of the land portion near the tire equatorial plane is set to not more than 15 degrees when viewed in a plan view of the tread, and

an angle of land side wall surfaces of the recessed portions relative to lines normal to the tread surface of the tread is set to not more than 30 degrees when viewed in cross section along a tire radial direction that is orthogonal to the longitudinal direction of the steep-angle grooves.

12. (new): The pneumatic tire as claimed in claim 10, wherein the boundary lines, near the tire equatorial plane, between the recessed portions and the tread surface of the land portion are arranged such that the boundary lines of the recessed portions at one side of the tire equatorial plane and the boundary lines of the recessed portions at another side of the tire equatorial plane are aligned in a straight line in the circumferential direction.

13. (new): The pneumatic tire as claimed in claim 10, wherein the boundary lines, near the tire equatorial plane, between the recessed portions and the tread surface of the land portion are arranged such that the boundary lines of the recessed portions at one side of the tire equatorial plane and the boundary lines of the recessed portions at the other side of the tire equatorial plane are spaced apart from each other outward in the tire axial direction.

14. (new): The pneumatic tire as claimed in claim 10, wherein the recessed portions are formed to extend from longitudinal directional middle portions of the steep-angle grooves to end

portions of the steep-angle grooves near the tire equatorial plane, and a length of the recessed portions measured along the tire circumferential direction is set within a range from 25 to 50 % of an arrangement pitch of the steep-angle grooves in the tire circumferential direction.

15. (new): The pneumatic tire as claimed in claim 10, wherein a height of the deepest portion of each recessed portion measured from a groove bottom of the adjacent steep-angle groove to the tire radial direction outer side is set within a range from 25 to 75 % of a groove depth of the steep-angle grooves.

16. (new): The pneumatic tire as claimed in claim 10, wherein the steep-angle grooves are arranged with a phase difference in the circumferential direction between those at one side of the tire equatorial plane and those at the other side of the tire equatorial plane.

17. (new): The pneumatic tire as claimed in claim 10, wherein an angle of the steep-angle grooves relative to the tire circumferential direction is set within a range from 5 to 30 degrees.

18. (new): The pneumatic tire as claimed in claim 10, further comprising transverse grooves provided at the axial direction outer sides from the steep-angle grooves, the transverse grooves opening toward respective tread contact-area ends,

19. (new): The pneumatic tire as claimed in claim 10, further comprising circumferential grooves extending in the tire circumferential direction, the circumferential grooves being disposed in areas of 40 to 60 % of a tread half width from the tire equatorial plane toward the respective tread contact-area ends.

20. (new): The pneumatic tire as claimed in claim 10, wherein the recessed portions at the right and left sides of the tire equatorial plane are arranged not to overlap with each other in the tire width direction.